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ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the question of whether counselors can work with a large group of students and effectively aid them with their vocational development and, if so, what approach would produce the best results. Undecided students at Brigham Young University were selected to attend College Orientation 96, a course designed to help them choose their major. Three experimental groups received educational-occupational information and/or self-analysis information under different conditions. A control group took the vocational course during the second half of the semester. All were tested at the beginning and end of the treatment period with: (1) a self-report instrument, indicating their level of development toward a college major choice; (2) Crite's Vocational Development Inventory Attitude Scale; and (3) the Harren Q-Sort which placed students at one of four stages of development toward an occupational choice. Results and considerations for further research are extensively discussed. It was concluded that counselors can be effective in speeding up the vocational development of undecided college students by the use of large guidance groups. (TL)

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A STUDY TO DETERMINE WHICH APPROACH TO LARGE VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE GROUPS IS MOST EFFECTIVE IN AIDING THE EDUCATIONAL CHOICE AND VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

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A fair portion of the freshmen entering American colleges each year are undecided as to their college major choice and also as to their eventual occupational choice. This is a very frustrating experience for these college students, especially when they are continually asked by their friends and associates what they plan to study in college.

In recent years some men have attempted to analyse this problem of vocational choice and such men as Ginsberg (1951), Super (1957), Tiedeman (1961), Hershenson (1968) and Ivey (1968) have concluded that choosing an occupation is part of a vocational developmental process that continues through life instead of an event that happens only once.

Tyler (1961) has observed that the task of counseling psychologists is to find out what we need to know to facilitate this process and put this knowledge to work to help young people. Crites (1965) suggests that we try different experimental treatments to discover which guidance experiences are of most help to students in speeding their vocational development. Since it is almost always physically impossible for counselors to work with all students under their direction on an individual or small group counseling basis it becomes necessary for counselors to work with larger guidance groups of students. Can counselors work with large guidance groups and still be effective in aiding students with their vocational development? If counselors do work with large groups, which approach with these large groups would produce the best results? The purpose of this

controlled study was to attempt to answer these questions by varying the approaches to College Vocational guidance groups of approximately 30 students each to determine which treatment or treatments were of most help in facilitating the educational choice and vocational development of college students who are undecided as to their college major.

Research Design

During the fall semester at the Brigham Young University students who are undecided as to their college major have an opportunity to register for College Orientation 96, a class designed to help them with their major choice. Ten sections of this class were offered the first half of the semester and five sections the second half of the semester. Six of the ten classes at the beginning of the semester were chosen to be used as the experimental groups. Students who had to take the class the second half of the semester because the first half classes were filled were used as the control group.

The usual orientation group sessions met for 50 minutes once a week for eight weeks during which time the major and minor offerings of the 12 colleges at B.Y.U. along with related occupations are systematically presented to students. Representatives from the various colleges were present at the scheduled time to answer student questions. For this study it was necessary to cut the usual eight group sessions to seven to make it possible to conduct the necessary pre and post testing during the half semester allowed for these classes.

In this study the large group sessions were conducted by two counselors with each counselor conducting one of the groups in each of the

three different experimental treatments. The purpose of the two counselors was to study the counselor variable so that it would be known whether differences between treatments were due to the counselor or the treatment. The various experimental treatments are as follows:

Experimental Group A. The students in the two guidance groups for this treatment received only educational and occupational information in the usual manner during the seven 50 minute class periods.

Experimental Group B. The students in the two guidance groups for this treatment received educational and occupational information during half of each 50 minute class period and self analysis information and help during the last half of each period. These students had their results of the SVIB, Edwards Personal Preference Record and ACT test to aid them with their self analysis.

Experimental Group C. The students in each of the two guidance groups for this treatment were divided into five small groups of six to seven students each. These small groups, each conducted by a trained counselor from the Brigham Young University Counseling Service, considered educational and occupational information and self analysis data in an informal manner during each group session. These students had their SVIB, EPPS and ACT test results the same as the students in Group B.

Control Group D. The students in this group took the vocational orientation class during the second half of the semester because they were unable to get into the class the first half of the semester.

The students in the experimental and control groups were tested at the beginning and at the end of the treatment period on three instruments. These instruments included a self report instrument on which the students

checked one of five stages of development towards a college major choice, the Crite's Vocational Development Inventory Attitude Scale which provided a score that indicated each student's level of vocational maturity (Crites, 1965), and the Harren Q-sort which placed the students into one of four stages of development toward a college major choice and one of four stages toward an occupational choice based on Tiedeman's four "anticipation stages" (Harren, 1966).

The student gain scores from the pre to the post testing were used for the statistical comparisons. These scores were analysed by analysis of variance followed by a t test comparison where significant differences existed between treatment groups and to compare the equal number experimental groups with the control group. Student scores were transformed to meet the assumption of homogeneity of variance for the analysis of variance comparison and compared and an unequal group comparison was also made. Since no real difference existed in the comparisons, the regular scores with equal number experimental groups was used in reporting the results of this study. For a more exact analysis of the data the unequal experimental groups were made equal by the use of random tables.

To determine if there were any differences between the groups on the pre test with each of the three instruments, an analysis of variance comparison was made of all groups involved in the study. It was found that no differences, not even near differences, existed between the group. Therefore at the beginning of the study all students involved in the various groups are basically on the same level of vocational development.

Attendance during the seven sessions for each of the treatment and counselor groups was analysed and no significant differences existed

between the groups as far as the students' attendance was concerned.

It was hypothesized that when comparing undetermined major college students who had experienced seven group sessions of Vocational College Orientation under the various treatments as described above:

1. That there would be no differences between the students in the three experimental groups compared with the control as far as their self report movement toward a college major, their vocational attitude maturity, an improved stage toward a college major and an improved stage toward an occupational choice.

2. That there would be no differences between the students in the three experimental groups when compared on each of the four instruments.

3. That there would be no differences between the students in the two counselor groups for each of the three experimental groups as measured by the four instruments.

4. That there would be no differences between the treatment groups and counselor groups as measured by the four instruments.

Results

The null hypothesis one was rejected because significant differences did exist when each of the three treatment groups were compared with the control group on each of the four instruments. These differences are given in Table 1.

All three treatment methods aided students significantly in their movement toward a college major choice as measured by the Self Report Instrument.

All three treatment groups gave significant aid to students in their

efforts to develop more mature vocational attitudes as measured by the Crites VDI Attitude Scale. One interesting observation in this comparison is that the control group during their first seven weeks of college had a minus gain score as measured by the instrument, even though this was not significant.

The large group receiving only educational and occupational information and the large group receiving educational and occupational information plus self analysis information aided students significantly toward a college major choice as measured by the Harren instrument. The group broken down into small counseling groups was not significantly better than the control groups.

Only the large group which received educational and occupational information gave significant help to students in their movement toward an improved stage of development toward an occupational choice. The large treatment group providing self analysis help and the group divided into small counseling groups offering information and self analysis help were not significantly better than the control as measured by the Harren Occupational stage instrument.

Hypothesis two was rejected because a significant difference did exist between the treatment groups on the Harren major stage instrument. The treatment group comparisons on each instrument is given in Table 2 and a t test comparison of treatment groups to determine where differences existed is given in Table 3.

The differences that did exist between the treatment groups in their effectiveness to help students move toward a more improved stage of development toward a college major existed between the large information

self analysis group and the small group with similar treatment. The large group with a more formal presentation of occupational and educational self analysis information seemed to aid students more than the small counseling groups with an informal presentation of this information.

The null hypothesis three was rejected because differences did exist between the counselors in their effectiveness to aid students to develop more mature vocational attitudes as measured by the Crites VDI Attitude scale. The counselor comparisons are given in Table 4. The t test comparisons showing where counselor differences did exist is given in Table 5.

Counselor two was significantly less effective, according to this analysis, when using the large group information self analysis approach than counselor one using the same approach or an information only approach.

Hypothesis four was rejected because there was a significant interaction between counselor groups and treatment groups on the Harren occupational stage instrument. The interaction F score was 4.3628 and was significant at the $p < .05$ level. Counselor groups were not consistent with the treatment groups in their effectiveness in aiding students move to a more improved stage of occupational development.

Discussion

From the results as given in Table 1 it can be observed that students who are undecided on a college major and who come to college and merely take classes as the control group did make very little progress in their vocational development during their first seven weeks of college.

The null hypothesis was used in this study because it was not known if

seven 50 minute group sessions once a week would be enough to produce any significant vocational development in college students. This study gives indication that short term large guidance groups give significant aid to student vocational development whether the treatment content is educational and occupational information or educational and occupational plus self analysis information. Each of the large treatments seem to aid students significantly in their development towards a college major choice and in developing more mature vocational attitudes. The large treatment group giving students educational and occupational information was the only treatment which aided students significantly toward an improved occupational stage of development. Providing students with educational and occupational information seems to be important if they are going to improve their stage of occupational development.

Students experiencing the seven sessions in small vocational counseling groups were aided significantly toward a college major choice and in developing more mature vocational attitudes. As far as changing their stage of development toward a major choice or an occupational choice these groups were not significantly better than the control group.

Significant differences were found to exist between treatment groups as far as improving students' stage of development toward a college major choice as shown in Table 2. The students having the large group information self analysis experience made significantly more development than students experiencing the small group treatment as Table 3 reveals. The reason for this difference could be the subject of future research. Since counselor differences did not exist on this major stage comparison, differences seemed to be due to treatment and not counselor differences.

Students in large treatment groups under different counselors differed in their movement toward more vocationally mature attitudes. The students in the large information self analysis treatment group under counselor two made significantly less development in their vocational attitudes than the students under counselor one with the same treatment or with the information only treatment. The type of qualities or approaches a counselor should use or have in order to aid students in their development of more mature vocational attitudes would be another subject for future research.

The results of this study indicate that counselors can be effective in speeding up the vocational development of college students who are undecided on a college major by the use of large guidance groups of approximately 30 students. For students who need to choose a college major, self analysis information along with educational and occupational information seemed to give extra aid to their vocational development. For students who need to choose an occupation it seems from this study that a concentration on educational and occupational information produces the most growth in a short period of time.

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Table 1

Gain Score Mean t test Comparisons of Three Experimental Groups

With the Control on Four Instruments

Group	Number	Gain Score Means	t
Self Report Instrument			
Experimental Group A	52	.750	3.227**
Experimental Group B	52	.961	4.227***
Experimental Group C	52	.865	3.772***
Control Group D	72	.069	
Crites VDI Attitude Scale			
Experimental Group A	52	1.173	2.915**
Experimental Group B	52	1.961	2.678**
Experimental Group C	52	.884	2.470*
Control Group D	72	-.722	
Harren Q-sort Major Stage Instrument			
Experimental Group A	48	.583	2.941**
Experimental Group B	48	.833	4.232***
Experimental Group C	48	.229	1.111
Control Group D	72	.039	
Harren Q-sort Occupational Stage Instrument			
Experimental Group A	48	.583	2.259*
Experimental Group B	48	.467	1.667
Experimental Group C	48	.114	.161
Control Group D	72	.146	

*p <.05
**p <.01
***p <.001

Table 2

Analysis of Variance Comparisons of the Gain Score Means for the Three Experimental Groups on Four Instruments

Instruments	Gain Score Means			F
	Group A	Group B	Group C	
Self Report Instrument	.750	.961	.865	.3676
Crites VDI Attitude	1.173	.961	.884	.0793
Harren Major Stage	.583	.833	.229	3.5180*
Harren Occupational Stage	.583	.467	.114	2.746

*p < .05

Table 3

t test Comparison of Three Experimental Group Gain Score Means on the Harren Major Stage Instrument

Groups	Group Means	t
Group A	.583	1.145
Group B	.833	
Group A	.583	1.622
Group C	.229	
Group B	.833	2.766*
Group C	.229	

*p < .01

Table 4

Analysis of Variance Comparisons of Student Gain Score Means of Each Counselor Treatment Group on Four Instruments

Groups	df	MS	F
Self Report Counselor Comparison:			
Six Counselor Groups	1	2.077	1.309
Errors	150	1.588	
Crites Attitude Counselor Comparison:			
Six Counselor Groups	1	131.0833	8.967*
Error	150	14.619	
Harren Major Stage Counselor Comparison:			
Six Counselor Groups	1	2.500	.199
Error	138	12.574	
Harren Occupational Stage Counselor Comparison:			
Six Counselor Groups	1	3.403	.326
Error	138	10.437	

*p <.01

Table 5

A t test comparison of Counselor Differences on the Crites' VDI Attitude Scale

Groups		Means	t
Group A	Counselor 1	2.115	2.291*
Group B	Counselor 2	-.153	
Group B	Counselor 1	2.076	2.252*
Group B	Counselor 2	-.153	

*p < .05